

LONG ISLAND FORUM



Shelter Island home of Mrs. Edna A. Mercer, built by Charles Langdon Corwin prior to 1877

From Watercolor by Cyril A. Lewis

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LETTERS FROM FORUM READERS

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**THE
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Published Monthly at
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FOR LONG ISLANDERS EVERYWHERE

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Contributing Editors

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 Malcolm M. Willey, Ph.D.
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Tel. AMityville 4-0554

Prices in 1863

For a long time I have read Mr. Bailey's very fine columns on Long Island history. In the January issue of the Forum I read a most interesting letter by Dr. Wood entitled "Rowdyism and Romance, 1861". East Quogue was my birth-place—1881, then called Atlanticville. I knew John Quinn very well, he being my Sunday School teacher when I was a small boy. The names Dayton and Cooper brought back memories. I have heard my parents speak of the things referred to in the letter.

In 1863-64 my grandfather, William Henry Foster, was postmaster at Atlanticville and ran the grocery store there. Having his old ledger dated April, 1863, after reading the letter I found Messrs. Dayton and Cooper were among his customers during 1863-64 when the population of the village had increased to about 15 families from about six when my grandfather settled there. In his early days the mail was carried by stagecoach and placed in an old hollow tree. Here are some 1863 items from the ledger:

Purchased by William Dayton, 1 bar Babbitts soap 8c, 13½ lb. ham \$1.76, paper of tobacco 8c, ¼ lb. tea 30c, quart of molasses 16c.

Purchased by Charles Cooper, 20 lbs. nails \$1.30, ½ gal. vinegar 9c, 2 qts. salt 12c.

Fletcher I. Rockefeller
 Port Jefferson

✱ ✱ ✱

Knows the Surf

Mr. Julian D. Smith's article "Listen to the Surf" was unusual, and beautifully written. I remember as a child at Point O' Woods I'd get up in the night to look out at the Ocean and listen to its fascinating sounds as it pruned on the beach.

And later I spent twenty-five summers at Oak Beach. The Ocean was always "a thing of beauty and a joy forever!"

Mildred Burr Schluter,
 (Mrs. Frederick H.)
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Shore Whaling Came First

Paul Bailey

THE first white men to live at the east end of Long Island as early as 1640 when Southold and Southampton towns were erected, learned off-shore or shore whaling from the local Indians. The only craft used by these Indians was the dugout; never the birch-bark canoe of the mainland tribes.

The first step in the creation of a dugout was to choose a straight tree, preferably with no low limbs and sufficiently tall. A small fire at the base was kept burning until the tree fell. Lopping off any branches which might interfere, the Indian then tapered the ends of the trunk by charring and scraping alternately, using heavy seashells (possibly large clams) or sharp rocks. The ends were undercut so that the craft might be more handily carried on the shoulders.

The cockpit was formed by the same slow process of burning and scraping, the sides becoming remarkably well shaped and the whole craft in time assuming a fine buoyancy. It is said that a dugout was made for Chief Wyandanch that would carry 40 men and was used in voyaging as far as Boston.

But a smaller dugout, made to carry five or six men who propelled it from a crouching position, using short, broad paddles, was Long Island's original whaleboat. Never less than two such craft were sent in pursuit of a whale and sometimes a considerable fleet of them was needed to turn the mammal shoreward.

During the winter months these whaling dugouts were kept on the outer beach, near the surf, and at the warning cry from a lookout posted on a high sand-dune, they would be quickly launched through the breakers. Being armed only with stone-tipped wooden

spears, the redskins endeavored to drive the whale into shallow water where squaws, youths and old men helped dispatch it with knives and hatchets. Then, hacking away the tail and huge fins which alone were used by the Indians, the great carcass was left to carrion birds.

Soon after the arrival of the white man, his iron harpoon was adopted by the Indian. In 1643, however, the town fathers of Southampton ordered their village smithy, one Robert Bond, to cease supplying the redskins with "such dangerous weapons". It is assumed that by then the whites had mastered the art of killing their own whales, a development which prompted the redskins to demand certain parts of each whale killed by their white neighbors. As

these parts were not particularly useful to the settlers, they granted the demand and the two races continued to live in harmony with one another, each killing its own whale in its own way.

One thing which the settlers did not adopt from the aborigines was the dugout. They had too often seen these sturdy but cranky contraptions capsize far from shore, which, according to Roger Williams' writings, was a common occurrence. But, declared Williams, these Indians were strong swimmers and were adept at righting an overturned "canoe."

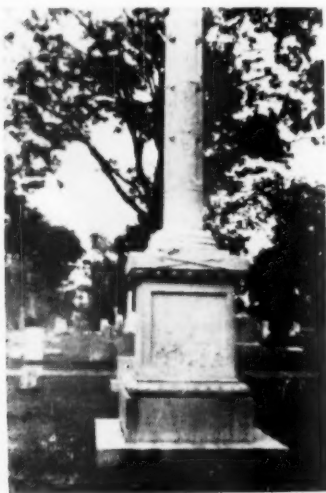
Southampton's founding fathers entered the whaling industry as beachcombers. As early as 1644 the town was divided into four districts in each of which eleven persons, sometimes women, were designated to salvage the carcasses



Early Long Island Whalers

of whales found on their section of the beach. After permitting the Indians to carry away the tail and fins of each such carcass, the thrifty settlers made sure to get the head and blubber for the precious oil, and thus the whaling industry on Long Island was born.

Shore whaling was by no means confined to the easterly end of Long Island during early colonial times. In 1652 the West India company, which operated and governed the Dutch province of New



Whalers' Monument

Netherland of which western Long Island was a choice part, wrote to Director-General Peter Stuyvesant advising him to at once open up a whale-fishery as "it would be very desirable as adding to commerce." The same communication, incidentally, explained to the one-legged Stuyvesant that "Our last letter to you was sent by the small ship Anna which was, God help it, captured by the English."

There is a tendency on the part of some authorities to credit the Dutch with being America's first whalers, they having set up the earliest whaling stations at the west end of Long Island. Nevertheless, some dozen years before 1652 when Stuyvesant was in-

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Banking by the Long Island Railroad

MERGERS, consolidations, expansions of Nassau and Suffolk Banks have become the normal thing, it seems — all brought about by the tremendous increase in homes and businesses in the two counties, especially Nassau. What for years have been country banks, suddenly overnight assume the proportions of city institutions. One almost expects to see the fine, old, representative name, Bank of Long Island, reappear.

My father, Valentine W. Smith, at his death a retired vice-president of the Bank of the Manhattan Company, had been a part of Long Island banking all his life. So to tell about the early banking on Long Island is to recount some of his stories and experiences.

In 1888 a little private bank had been opened in Far Rockaway known as the Wallace, Smith & Company, Bankers. The next year the bank incorporated as the Bank of Far Rockaway, a State bank (1889). Later it became one of the three banks in Queens which joined to become the Bank of Long Island with main office at Jamaica (1903). The Bank of Long Island lost its name in a merger with the Bank of the Manhattan Company thirty-three years ago (1920).

Samuel R. Smith of Freeport filled all the jobs and positions in the Wallace, Smith & Company, Bankers in 1888 — cashier, teller, stenographer, runner, janitor, and top brass. A few days after my father graduated from Brown's Business School in Brooklyn this cousin Samuel dropped around to see him in the Merrick homestead. Samuel offered a clerk's job in the bank down in Far Rockaway. My father, aged 19, took the job at \$6 a week — and that was a six-day week, six full days, and before Lincoln's Birthday,

Julian Denton Smith
Secretary Nassau County Historical Society

Labor Day, and Columbus Day had been recognized as holidays.

Transportation costs on the Long Island Railroad between Freeport and Far Rockaway cut deeply into the \$6. With \$5 borrowed from his father, my father bought a high-front-wheel bicycle. It was a real oldtimer with the big wheel in front and a little one in back. In good weather on days he did not ride the trains, he pedaled to and from Far Rockaway, a distance of approximately 12 miles one way.

I think he took the Merrick Road to Lyabrook and then turned down Broadway to Far Rockaway; Central Avenue from Hewlett to Far Rockaway had not been laid out. The Foxhurst and East Rockaway roads were usually

badly rutted and in poor shape.

A little later my father replaced the old bicycle with a new Columbia which rode easier and made better time. Both wheels were of the same size. I learned to ride on the Columbia. I never saw my father get on the seat by standing on one pedal and swinging his other leg up and over the seat. He stepped in back of the rear wheel, put his right foot on a little projection — a step — at the axil of the wheel, and mounted with a springy leap. I never got the knack of that as I was too small, could not reach the handlebars while standing on the rear step. I usually started by bringing the Columbia alongside the sloping cellar door and, climbing aboard somehow or other, pushed off — all pretty much one action.

On Monday, Wednesday and Friday of each week my father commuted to Far



Long Island Railroad Train of Yesteryear

Rockaway. The Bank failed to help him out financially on the train fare because it considered his services on the trains as much his job as any work he performed at his desk.

In these days the train from Freeport consisted of three wooden cars hauled along by a locomotive. The curve at Lynbrook station (Pearsall's in those days) was banked to keep the Babylon express on the tracks as it tore through the village. When locals stopped at Lynbrook the south side of the cars he'd about one foot higher than the north, approximately the angle of the slope. The Lynbrook station stood on the south side of the tracks just east of Atlantic Avenue.

At Valley Stream my father changed to the Far Rockaway train, two cars and a locomotive. This train shuttled back and forth a couple of times a day between Valley Stream and Far Rockaway, the end of the line. The engine was reversed on a turntable operated by the train crew at Far Rockaway. The entire train turned 180 degrees at Valley Stream by running through a Y formed by the branch and main line tracks. The Babylon line had a pair of tracks and the Rockaway branch a single track. The Rockaway branch was extended to Hammels a few years later where it connected with the Rockaway Beach line crossing Jamaica Bay on a trestle and drawbridges. A Y was provided at Hammels to turn the trains around for both branch lines.

The station at Valley Stream was located within the Y and at the southwest corner of the intersection of the tracks and Rockaway Avenue. The Rockaway train waited immediately south of the station. Enormous elm trees grew near the track and shaded train and station.

On the three mornings each week before boarding the train at Freeport my father had made the rounds of the

stores in town collecting deposits and arranging banking business. At Rockville Centre and Lynbrook the merchants met the train and transacted their business with my father as he stood on the station platform beside the cars. Many times the conductor waited for him to conclude his banking activities before signaling the engineer to go ahead. Similar banking privileges were offered at the side of the Rockaway train when it stopped at Hewlett, Woodmere (Woodsburg) and Cedarhurst (Ocean Point).

Some bank customers thought they could wait two days until my father again opened his 'bank' beside the train. To take care of these people he arranged to have their business in hand if they would meet the evening train as he returned to Freeport. This procedure soon grew into regular practice with banking accommodations both morning and evening.

The office of the bank at Far Rockaway was a 9x20 foot space in the dry goods store of Joseph M. Kraus, one of the only two Jewish merchants in Far Rockaway in 1888. A single telephone line served the Rockaways at that date and the phone hung on the wall of the corner drug store. It had four extensions — none to the bank — and an operator at the drug store handled the traffic on the extensions. These are of interest — one to a hotel, one to the butcher shop, another to the Rockaway Hunt Club, and the fourth to the drug store at Rockaway Beach.

Many times after our family moved to Far Rockaway my brother and I have gone along with my father as he carried money and securities to and from the Bank of the Manhattan Company on Wall Street with which the bank at Far Rockaway always did business. We were youngsters about ten and twelve and those city trips were

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The Gay Nineties on Shelter Island

IT was the year 1871 that marked the beginning of the present era of Shelter Island as a summer-resort. A group of Methodists from Brooklyn bought the uninhabited section variously known as White Hill or Prospect, and organized "The Shelter Island Grove and Camp Meeting Association of the Methodist Episcopal Church".

The organizers of the Camp Meetings built themselves three kitchen-less cottages along the Prospect waterfront, with Gothic-pointed windows. In 1872 the Camp Meetings opened, and the Prospect Hotel was built. Other kitchen-less cottages with Camp Meeting Gothic wooden-frame windows were built around the Camp Meeting Grove, and an open-air auditorium. A large one-floor building served as the community-kitchen for the kitchen-less cottages.

The Camp Meetings prospered. Several prominent Divines built summer homes nearby on what came to be called Divinity Hill—Dr. F. H. Behrends, Dr. Richard S. Storrs, Dr. Edward B. Coe, Dr. John L. Scudder and others. Dr. Ira Sankey of "Moody and Sankey" fame was an occasional visitor.

The Camp Meetings flourished for twenty years, then waned. The open-air auditorium was dismantled. The Community-kitchen closed, and was rebuilt with upper stories as The Bay View Hotel, later The Chequit Inn. The kitchen-less cottages, with running-water now available, took on outgrowths containing kitchens and bathrooms.

All that is now left from the Camp Meetings is the interdenominational Chapel-in-the-Grove where regular services are still held every Summer. The pulpit flag in the Chapel has only 38 stars. A few of the

Starr Gardiner Cooper

Editor's Note

Major Cooper (USA, Ret.) is a grandson of Gilbert H. Cooper, Sag Harbor whaleship owner of the 19th century. A long-time summer resident of Shelter Island, he knows its history quite as well as that of the whaling port of his ancestors.

Camp Meeting cottages have not yet replaced the Gothic windows with the less-expensive-to-repair rectangular window frames. Many present summer people do not even know that the Island's summer-colony started as a Camp Meeting.

Visitors to the Camp Meetings spread the word of the charm of Shelter Island as

yachts that one could walk across the harbor jumping from deck to deck, without getting his feet wet!

In 1910 the Manhanset House was completely destroyed by fire, and has never been rebuilt. On its site is now the summer home of Mrs. Anthony J. Drexel. The New York Yacht Club Station was floated to Sag Harbor. The Shelter Island-Greenport Ferry abandoned its Manhanset stop. Almost as if to eliminate the name as well as the memory of Manhanset, the cottagers near the old Manhanset House site organized a new "Village" and called it "The Village of Dering Harbor." Dering Harbor is now the smallest



The Old Sylvester Homestead

Sketched by W. O. Stevens for his Book, "Discovering Long Island"

a summer-resort. A year after the Prospect Hotel, the Manhanset House opened across Dering Harbor. It burned in 1896, but was rebuilt on a super-deluxe scale—for those days. The New York Yacht Club opened a station at Manhanset which is today the Club House of the Sag Harbor Yacht Club. When The New York Yacht Club made its overnight stop at Manhanset on its annual cruise, an eyewitness tells how Dering Harbor was so crowded with

organized community in New York State, with a roster of only 18 voters.

After twenty-five years of prosperity, the Prospect Hotel just naturally began to grow old. So in 1895 it was enlarged and completely renovated as "The Prospect House." It had all the latest improvements, even to rooms-with-private-bath; that is, in the whole hotel, there were two rooms so equipped. The Prospect opened the week-end after the city

Continued on next page

Reminders

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Gay Nineties

Continued from page 87

public schools closed, and closed on the day after Labor Day. And it was full, cram full, all season! You made your reservation for the whole season or you didn't get your room. Not yet had the automobile broken up the summer vacation into week-ends. Not yet had been discovered the wisdom that school and college boys and girls should take summer jobs.

Young people fairly swarmed. There was dancing every evening in the Prospect Casino, from 7:30 to 8:30 for the children, from 8:30 to 10:30 for the others. Short pants, short dresses, marked you as one of the children. Many's the time I wore short pants until 8:30, then shifted into my first long trousers for the evening. Many's the time beloved Tom Austin at the piano would point his finger at us would-be grown-ups and then point to the door. And — we obeyed him. Because we idolized him.

The Gay Nineties and the first decade of the Nineteen-hundreds were gay indeed at Shelter Island! When nobody was overly rich, and nobody was overly poor. When the young folks were thrilled by the suggestion of an ice-cream soda at the drugstore. When the well-dressed bathing girl never let a gap of bare skin show between her black stockings and her full black bloom-

ers. When Miss Roebling, of the Brooklyn Bridge Roeblings, drove down to the bathing-beach in a high trap with tandem horses. When the Yale Varsity quarterback won his bet that he could down twelve pineapple sundaes without stopping. When New York City politicians foregathered aboard Charles Towne's schooner-yacht "Tammany." When, definitely, thirty was the line of demarcation between the older and younger sets. When the older set said to the younger, "Your day is coming" — and meant it. Great days those, the Gay Nineties, when folks "beyond thirty" not only knew how to be their age but enjoyed it! But in 1942 the Prospect burned to the ground. An era had ended.

The Slaveship Wanderer

For some years on our way to the southeast we have spent about two weeks in Brunswick, Georgia. There is still a great deal of interest among the historically minded there regarding the Wanderer (L. I. Slaveship). I therefore recently sent to an officer of the Brunswick Chamber of Commerce the Forum of several years ago in which Miss Kate W. Strong devoted a column to the story.

In their acknowledgement they tell me that it gave them information they never had before and was so interesting that they wondered if the Forum in which Mr. H. P. Horton wrote more fully of the Wanderer was available.

George G. Brainerd,
 Setauket.

Note: A copy of the Horton story has been forwarded. Editor.

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How a Buggy Saved a Barnfull

HERE is Mr. Milton Davis's own family tale, which he kindly consented to let me retell to Forum readers. It happened in the time of his father, Mr. Chauncey Davis of Miller Place.

I remember the latter gentleman well. We often met at Mr. Sam West's blacksmith shop in East Setauket. It seems that one of the Davis horses, a nervous bay, would not allow anyone but Mr. West to shoe him, so Mr. Davis took the long ride from Miller Place to East Setauket, instead of going to a nearer blacksmith shop.

Mr. Milton Davis told me that always on the morning his father was taking such a trip, he would insist that breakfast be served early so he would get to the West shop before another early riser. This may very well have been me as I saw to the shoeing of all of our five horses except one which I was not allowed to drive. No matter how early I got to Mr. West's smithy, Mr. Davis would always get there first.

Now to get on with the story. At one time Mr. Chauncey Davis bought a very fine top buggy, but wagon sheds in the old time barns were not built for top carriage; as there were very few such vehicles out in the country in the early days. Sheds had very low entrances although plenty high inside. The accompanying photo shows two such sheds which I knew very well as I often tied my horse there when calling on a certain friend.

Driving into such a shed was a simple matter as long as a buggy's top was partly down, but to back out with a restless horse was another matter, as the rig had to be kept exactly in the middle to clear the sloping corners. This, however, was no problem to Mr. Davis who always put

Kate Wheeler Strong

down the top of his beautiful buggy, then backed it into the shed where, to keep the material from cracking, he again raised the top which, of course, he had to drop again before driving out.

Mr. Davis followed this procedure in his own wagon shed which housed the luxurious top buggy. One night he was roused from sleep by a tremendous crash. Rushing to a window, to his amazement he saw the barnyard full of his stock. It was obvious what had happened as he slept and what had caused the awakening crash.

A party of roving gypsies, it seems, bent on stealing his animals had brought them from the barn. About to drive them off, they perceived the beautiful top buggy in its shed. What a wonderful rig that would make for their Gypsy queen! Not realizing how high its top was, they began pulling the vehicle from beneath the shed. Of course it was stopped by the low exit and, it being dark and the Gypsies being in haste, they gave one mighty pull and crash went that beautiful top, with a noise to waken the dead.

Of course the Gypsies fled, leaving the shattered buggy and the Davis stock, thankful themselves to make a getaway. As for Mr. Davis, I am sure he didn't begrudge the cost of repairs to the buggy in view of what it had saved him. And I am equally certain that he must have told the story again and again with great glee.

Forum a Dividend

That was a nice thought that induced the Union Savings Bank of Patchogue to present its fifty-year depositors with a year's subscription to the Long Island Forum, in connection with the Bank's recent reception. I wish to thank both the Bank and the Forum for this extra dividend.

Old Timer, Bellport.

Note: Thanks belong entirely to Patchogue's sturdy old financial institution, founded in 1896, which is paying the full rate for these subscriptions. Editor.

Would Return Hercules

I am enjoying the Forum as usual. You surely have done a fine job through the years.

On a recent visit to Stony Brook, I was really startled to see our friend Hercules, all gilded up sitting in the park, I would like to see him back down at Good Ground and still being a taxpayer on Long Island maybe I have the right to say so, I dunno.

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Letters From Our Readers

Continued from page 82

Dr. Corwin Recalls

The following letter was received by Evelyn Rowley Meier, author of "Old Time Sunday School Picnic" in our January issue:

Your contribution brings back many memories of happy times in Baiting Hollow in the 70s and 80s, via the Sunday School.

The names Rowley and Seeley bring back many memories of Wading River as would Charles Wells, (the storekeeper), or Elihu Miller (the florist) or Woodhull, or Tut-hill, or Valentine, or many others.

You write of the year 1885. I take you back about eight years before that, when Baiting Hollow had such a picnic across the Sound to New Haven. I doubt if you ever heard of it, but at the eastern end of old Baiting Hollow were some tugboat men of New York City who were good neighbors, and friendly. They were coaxed into lending their tugboats for a picnic. Two tugs came down from New York City the day before.

People gathered at Roanoke Landing at the eastern end of Baiting Hollow and there took passage on the two tugs, which were lashed together. The run across the Sound was made quickly. Several hours were spent in seeing the sights of New Haven and Yale College. One of the sights which impressed me, a boy of 7 or 8 years, was the beautiful Hillhouse Mansion shining like a palace in the sun, with great trees beside it. It seemed like a building of Heaven, set on a height.

It was a bit rough coming back but all ended well. This trip from rural Long Island to the metropolis of Connecticut was well worth all the effort, for many of the youngsters had their interests stimulated by that experience; many of the youngsters who went on that trip across the Sound went away to college, several to Yale.

I grant that your story was a most interesting one, with plenty of romance, but I say, too, that my story was equally important, equally romantic, and even more remote in the minds of those living today.

May I hope that others will recall matters of which I speak.

Continued on next page

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Letters From Our Readers

Continued from page 90

Thank you for jogging my memory.

Dr. Benjamin F. Corwin
185 Fenimore St.
Brooklyn, N. Y.

* * *

The Bicycle Age

Mr. George W. Winans' letter in the March number of the Forum will recall to many of us the pleasing features of a spectacular era that has long since passed into history. Jamaica of today with the main avenue jammed from curb to curb with autos all pouring out gas fumes, and many of them honking their horns, cannot compare with the more pleasing picture of the 1890s, when thousands of bicycles carrying men and women wheeled quietly along in groups of a hundred or more. Those who belonged to wheelmen's clubs would have their club name on the sweaters, and leaders would often have a club flag on the handle bars.

I was acquainted with one of the men in Mr. Winans' list of officers of the Tamaqua Wheelmen, W. Nelson Valk, and I also knew his father, Henry Valk who lived in Richmond Hill. The latter village also had a Wheelmen's Club in the 1890s, its club house being located on the west side of Lefferts Ave., just south of Jamaica Ave.

I remember well the special cars on the LIRR with their rubber covered hooks on which the wheels were hung. Groups of wheelmen would stand at the doors of the cars and hand up their wheels to the men inside. I bought my first bicycle in 1898 from a Jamaica bicycle shop located in the vicinity of Rockaway Ave., and Fulton St. I had ridden wheels long before I owned one.

Mr. Winans' picture of the bicycle parade on Fulton St., as it was then called, showed the bunting draped building of the Bank of Long Island that stood on the corner of Herriman Ave., (or was it St.?)

When the streets of Jamaica

Continued on Page 96

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Shore Whaling

(Continued from page 84)

structed to inaugurate whaling, the settlers at the east end of the island began their shore-whaling operations. When in 1655 Stuyvesant sent a delegation to the east end, presumably to look into whaling activities there, he learned, much to his annoyance, that these first white whalers of America preferred to send their whale-oil to Boston rather than to the Dutch port at the west end of the island.

The delegation also discovered that shore-whaling operations extended as far west as what is now Nassau County. And mostly the whalers were Englishmen or, at least, not Dutchmen, the reason being that the Indians and the Dutch were not on friendly terms, owing chiefly to Governor Kieft's mistreatment of the redskins before Stuyvesant succeeded him.

Shortly after the founding of Huntington town in 1653 several of its citizens began whaling on the outer beaches in what is now the town of Babylon. Among them were Jonas Wood, a Captain Matthews and Captain Edward Higby, founder of the Higby-Higbie-Higbee clan on the island. These three men, each being the owner of several vessels were also engaged in the West Indies trade.

Although their whaleboats were manned principally by fellow colonists, in every crew there was at least one Indian who served as harpooner. Another shore-whaler of this period who employed a similar policy was one Isaac Stratford whose station and try-works were on Fire Island Beach. Before many years there were white men whose skill in the chase was equal to that of their Indian boatmates.

But more than superior skill was the finer boat which the white man soon produced. Constructed of native cedar, light, graceful and easy to manage, it was exceptionally strong. This boat and the iron

harpoon and lance not only changed shore-whaling on Long Island into an important industry, but with them the white man gradually drove the once numerous right-whales into more remote waters where ships were needed to reach them.

The Boston Journal once credited William Hamilton, a Scotchman born on Cape Cod in 1643, with being New England's earliest white inhabitant to actually kill a whale. That being so, Hamilton was still an infant if not unborn when white Long Islanders were killing whales with lances made by Southampton's village smithy as early as 1643, the year of the New Englander's birth.

Soon after the founding of Southold town in 1640 a company was organized there for the purpose of catching and marketing "porpoises, grampuses and drumfish." In 1650 the town of Southampton issued to John Ogden a contract to strike whales. In 1654 one Odell was likewise licensed to use the harpoon.

Shore-whaling had become an important industry at the east end of Long Island by 1669 when, according to an entry for that year made by Samuel Mavericke "thirteen whales were taken before the end of March." Three years later the town of Nantucket in Rhode Island sent an invitation to James Loper of East Hampton to come to Nantucket to instruct its residents in the rudiments of shore-whaling, an invitation which was not accepted.

Among the east end whalemen of that period besides Loper were his father-in-law, Jacob Schellinger; Thomas and John Osborne, John Laughton, Obadiah Rogers, John Ogden, Reverend Thomas James, Lion Gardiner, William, James and Thomas Edwards, Thomas Chatfield, Robert Dayton, Richard and John Stratton, John Hopping, Benjamin Osborne, Richard Shaw, Stephen Hard, Thomas Dimon, Philip Leak,

(Continued on page 96)

Natural History Books

For those interested in identifying Long Island's trees and shrubs, BOTH WILD AND CULTIVATED, Prof. A. H. Graves' recently published and excellent "Illustrated Guide to Trees and Shrubs" is indispensable. For your copy, send a \$4 check to Killian's, Box 63, Water Mill, N. Y.

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The Wading River Post Office

Evelyn Rowley Meier

THOUGHTS of an old village post office bring many things to many minds: date stamps and postage stamps, call boxes and parcel post boxes, bills and billet doux, a wooden floor worn splintery by generations of feet, walks in the twilight to "get the mail", the pangs suffered for a letter that never came.

Wading River's post office can boast all these, and some unique features as well.

The beginnings of mail service in Wading River were identical with others of its period. Villagers exchanged the few necessary letters in the manner of the day, by casual messenger. If someone was riding through from New York to Southold and someone else had a relative in Wading River, the rider might be asked to carry a letter, penned in the stilted phraseology of the time, but most welcome to its recipient. And both messenger and message would cause quite a ripple on the usually flat surface of community life.

Later on, when footpaths became what were called roads, and more or less scheduled stagecoaches replaced the itinerant horseman, the number of messages increased, and had to be carried under the seat of the coach, having outgrown the messenger's pocket or rucksack.

At that time, the stagecoach driver was wont to leave his trust with the tavernkeeper, when he stopped to refresh his horses, his passengers, and himself. The tavernkeeper delivered the mail at his convenience.

In 1825, a century and a half after its settlement, Wading River had a postmaster of its own, and a designated repository for its incoming post. He was Zophar Mills Miller, and the repository was in his house, the historic 1799 house still known to all Long Island

as the Miller Homestead. Mr. Miller's commission was from John McLean, then Postmaster General, and it was dated February 26, 1825.

On his death in 1844, Zophar's son Sylvester was appointed to succeed him, on July 30 of that same year by Postmaster General Charles A. Wickliffe. The position passed from Sylvester Miller by appointment of Alexander Randall on Feb. 9, 1869, to Sylvester's son Elihu S. Miller, who resigned the post in 1885 when he and his family moved to Floral Park. This completed a span of sixty continuous years in one family and in one spot, a unique feature in post office history.

In those years, the job paid nothing except the cancellation value of letters mailed through that office, not a large sum the best year it ever had. Even though Elihu Miller's son William L. Miller was prevailed upon to take the postmastership back into the bosom of the family in 1916, after a succession of other masters, the job paid only \$300 a year, plus a small percentage of cancellations and a few cents on money orders, out of which he was required to provide quarters and equipment for the office.

During its organized lifetime, the Wading River post office moved several times, always in a dignified manner, always within a radius of a few hundred feet. That was

the way the villagers liked it: cozy and oldfashioned and comfortably accessible.


Imagine their dismay, therefore, to wake up one bleak March morning in 1935 to find it gone! Not to the house nextdoor, nor to the next corner, mind you, but three whole miles away, up to a general store at the entrance to Wildwood State Park, which store belonged to the then current postmaster, Elmer Bishop. And all without a whisper of warning!

Wading Riverites, quick to kindle to a just cause and believing this to be one, leapt in protest. Telegrams flew thick and fast in several directions.

The late Marlen Pew, famous newspaperman and resident of the village, wrote to First Assistant Postmaster General William W. Howes. Walter Lippman, noted columnist and author, also a resident of Wading River at that time, called on Postmaster General James A. Farley in Washington. Local political leaders took it up with not-so-local political leaders. Voters wrote to their Congressman, in that case the late Robert Low Bacon, who in turn contacted certain people. Metropolitan newspapers gave it front page position and the California and Texas papers were pleased to copy. Out of the travail the Wading River Civic Association was born.

Of course, all this activity got results. Two months later, a busy two months for

(Continued on page 97)



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Banking by LIRR

Continued from Page 86

wonderfully instructive sight-seeing outings, for my father knew and enjoyed the city. Father carried the money in a brown leather satchel, a rather disreputable looking affair. He never appeared anxious or overly careful about the satchel and handled it much like it had been filled with old shoes — a good act. I believe the same satchel had been the repository for the bank funds in the days of the banking by train.

Once as my father passed the Sub Treasury on Wall Street a stranger stepped up beside him and hit his wrist with a metal object expecting the pain to cause him to drop the satchel of money. Somehow my father managed to hang on to the old carrier and ran as fast as he could for the door of the Bank of the Manhattan Company. After that experience money was always moved with more than one messenger in attendance.

My father at one time hired a graduate of the Lawrence school as a stereographer in the bank. Sanford J. Ellsworth, the principal of the Far Rockaway school, questioned the local bank in going out of town for help. My father told him his graduates could not spell. The

outcome was a list of 300 words provided by the bank and required by Mr. Ellsworth of all eighth-grade pupils before graduation. I had my troubles with that list!

One day my father stood gazing out of a window going over his plans for the extra summer work which is expected by banks in resort towns, and Far Rockaway at the turn of the century was very much a resort town — summer hotels and so forth. The school boys and girls were playing along the street on their way home. My father called to one of the boys, "Here, Bill Dolan, come here a minute!" When Bill arrived at the window my father said to him, "Go home and ask your mother if you can work in the bank this summer." William J. Dolan came to work the day after school closed. Before his heart would go no further Bill Dolan had become the manager of the Far Rockaway office of the Bank of the Manhattan Company, and then a vice-president.

Money coming into a town in the pockets of visiting fire-

men, aldermen, or fair-goers is always of interest to banks. The bank at Far Rockaway reacted normally when the firemen's association of Queens County announced the next year's tournament and parade would be held in the Rockaways. Queens then consisted of all that is now Queens and Nassau counties. The day arrived and the bank let it be known that deposits would be accepted in safe-keeping after the usual banking hours.

The business session of the association had been conducted during the morning in the Columbia Hotel, the site now occupied by the Columbia Theatre in Far Rockaway. The speeches had been made from a stage set up by pushing dining tables together at one end of the main parlor. The afternoon had gotten off with a monster parade to terminate at the playing field with the final races of the tournament.

The races never came off! Before the parade had much more than started huge

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Hawkins Brothers of Jamesport

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AT Jamesport many years ago four sons of Daniel Hawkins, a coastwise mariner, having retired from the sea went into the business of reducing bunkers to oil and fertilizer. They built a fish factory on Shelter Island and another on Barren Island in Jamaica Bay.

Captain Ebenezer Hawkins managed the one and Capt. Simeon S. Hawkins the other. A third brother, Captain Edward, retired early to his farm, but Captain Jedediah Hawkins stuck to the fishery business and with Ebenezer and Simeon built two seine houses on the beach at Miamogue Neck where seines were repaired, new ones made and boats repaired, all of which gave work to many Jamesport men.

For themselves the Hawkins brothers each built a stately home at Jamesport, all of them still standing.

A political contest between brothers Edward and Simeon in 1889 attracted state-wide interest.

Captain Simeon was born at Stony Brook, March 30, 1827 and died at South Jamesport, Jan. 22, 1906 at the age of nearly 79. He was for many years a prominent and influential figure in Riverhead town affairs. (Survived by one daughter, Mrs. John E. Overton, Port Jefferson and two sons, Ebenezer of Brooklyn and Albert Etheridge of Jamesport).

At the age of fifteen years Simeon started out in the coasting trade. Soon he rose to be captain of a schooner at 20. He continued as master of sailing vessels for some twenty years, retiring in 41st year to engage in coal and lumber business at South Jamesport.

It was two years later that with his brothers, Ebenezer, Jedediah and Edward, Simeon embarked in the menhaden fishery business. They built

and operated six steamers with the necessary factory, etc. They won success, selling out after a considerable period to the company which took over the various plants along the coast.

Captain Simeon had started out in life as a Democrat but at the outbreak of the Civil War he renounced Democratic principles and later served as town supervisor, superintendent of the poor, two terms in the State Assembly, 1883 and 1884. Three years later he was elected to the State Senate.

When a candidate for reelection in 1889, his brother Captain Edward, a life long Democrat who had held no office, wrested the office of Senator from his brother in a district normally Republican.

Captain Simeon Hawkins was a charter member of Riverhead Savings Bank's board of trustees since 1872 when it was organized; was its vice president Jan. 16, 1891 to Jan. 16, 1903, succeeding in 1903 as president, Nat W.

Foster. He died at South Jamesport, Jan. 22, 1906, nearly 79 years of age.

Banking by LIRR

Continued from Page 94

billows of black smoke drifted high in the hot summer sky. The parade broke up and the firemen raced back to town. The big, wooden Columbia Hotel was ablaze. It made a great spectacle and attracted everyone in the village. The proprietor scooped his money into a tablecloth, ran to the bank and pushed it through the teller's window - tablecloth and all. In about two hours the hotel had burned flat to the ground in spite of the efforts of nearly every fireman and every piece of apparatus in all of Queens County!

The thought had not come to me until preparing this article that early banking on Long Island exhibits more than one earmark of the Wild West.

Of course I am enjoying the Forum. You are doing a wonderful work. Keep well. (Miss) Margaret Carman, Flushing.

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Shore Whaling

Continued from page 92

Benjamin Conkling, John Wheeler, Samuel and John Mulford, John Kirle, Robert Keddy, John Miller, Jr., Jacob Dayton and John Cooper.

There were also a number of companies operating try-works which in the year 1687 produced 2,148 barrels of oil. These companies were: Lieutenant Hervey Pierson & Co., Sagaponack; John Cook & Co., Mecox; Isaac Raynor & Co., Weekapogue; Francis Sayre & Co., Southampton; Joseph Pierson & Co., Shinnecock Point; Thomas Stephens & Co., Quogue, and John Jessup & Co., Ketchaponack. Besides the employment offered local inhabitants by these companies, they were a source of ready investment and few white residents there were who did not own shares in one or more of these concerns.

Also, as the whaling season began in the late fall and ended usually in March, the industry had the added advantage of using help when it was not needed on the farms. Because of this fact, early Long Island, unlike many parts of the mainland, developed a race of farmer-whalers as well as farmer-fishermen and profited thereby from all-year-round employment.

Letters From Our Readers

Continued from page 91

were named instead of numbered there was only one street crossing Fulton St., that carried the same name on both north and south sides, and that was Washington St. Quite a few of the cross streets are not directly opposite each other on Fulton St., and in some places there are more streets on one side than the other.

John Tooker, Babylon

"Our Town Huntington"

Under the above heading, a brochure has been issued in connection with the Tercentenary Celebration of that town to take place June 25 to July 4. It is an excellent job, both as a "pictorial history" and the art of offset printing. The committee which prepared and published the work, headed by Town Historian Robert L. Simpson (also chairman of the Tercentenary)

has as other members: Mrs. Fred E. Hall, Mrs. Carlisle Glezen, Reginald Runge, John Klaber, Rudolph Kausch and Charles Von Salzen.

I enjoy the Forum very much.

James A. Gildersleeve,
Mattituck.

Scoters, Sound, Snakes, Etc.

In the March issue of the Forum you carried a most interesting article entitled "Rafts of Scoters". As a naturalist or nature-science teacher of many years service I learned many interesting facts therefrom. Congratulations to my neighbor for such successful "sitting on the beach." Now after 52½ years of service in the New York City school system I have more time to read and write.

Julian Smith writes, "Let a man shoot at them as they rest on the water, and they get beneath the surface before the shot arrives." Now the question arises: "Do the Scoters hear or see better; or was the shooter a poor shot?" Here are some facts:

1. Sound travels near sea level when the temperature is 32 degrees F. at the rate of about 1090 feet per second.

2. At 60 degrees the speed of sound in air is 1120 feet per second.

3. At about the year 1905 the velocity of a U. S. army rifle bullet was 2300 feet per second and its effective range was about 4700 yards. These facts are true for some sport rifles.

4. Now light travels at the rate of over 186,000 miles per second.

Comparing the above facts we first note that the rifle bullet travels more than twice as fast as sound. Hence the bird would probably be dead before the sound from the gun could reach the bird. I agree with Neighbor Smith that Scoters, when diving, are much faster than the human eye. I also feel that such fast birds have sight that is so much faster in motion than sound that such sight is almost instantaneous.

Now such birds gather in large numbers and each bird has a pair of eyes "focusing" in opposite directions for protection. As one eye looks east or right, the other looks west or left. These birds are not like the well known barnyard hen with her famous demonstration of "wisdom" when she sees a kernel of corn for she takes time to inspect with one eye and then turn her head to check with the other eye.

When a Scoter sees a gun flash all action seems instantaneous and all have gone under the surface instantly for the gun flash light could travel around the equator several times before the shot could

Continued on next page

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Leigh Paintings on Exhibit

W. R. Leigh brings out a new series of bronchos, burros and Indians, together with a number of fine paintings of his earlier years, in his current retrospective exhibition, "The Fabulous West," at the Grand Central Art Galleries, Vanderbilt Avenue at 42nd Street, New York. Mr. Leigh, along with his artist-educator wife Ethel Traphagen, director of the Traphagen School of Fashion, is welcoming many admirers during this show. Indian costumes and jewelry from their collections add a unique touch. Easterners as well as Westerners will find these paintings immensely exciting as well as harmonious with the new feeling for ranch house architecture and decor which has swept the country. They breathe the essence of America's great open spaces that are too rapidly disappearing and are best preserved for us today only in the paintings of Remington, Russell and Leigh.

Wading River P. O.

Continued from page 93

many people, the Wading River Postoffice came home to roost, home being the so-called "heart" of the village.

It hasn't moved more than a few feet since, and most of those it serves want it that way.

Letters From Our Readers

Continued From Page 96

hit any of the birds. Almost the same quickness exists in the striking of a poisonous snake. But there is a split-second margin of safety before the snake strikes because his eyes are arranged somewhat like those of the Scoter and he must get his distance by reinforced vision of both eyes. Luckily there are no known areas of poisonous snakes on Long Island unless there be a very few isolated spots.

During the last year or so many interesting letters and articles on snakes have appeared in the Forum. One very interesting letter (October 1952) was by George E. Hart of Wading River. In the fifth paragraph he writes, "A blacksnake can bite or sting." For many years we have examined both the mouth and the tail of dead snakes to find the eating as well as the poison apparatus. There is no snake that can sting; only the rattler has a dry-ringed noise apparatus on its tail and this sounds like a very weak cicada's buzzer.

The forked tongue of all snakes is its organ of recognition of danger, for snakes have very weak eyes. The tongue contacts the air

Continued next page



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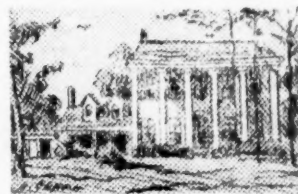
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CARMAN HOMESTEAD, 1776
Massapequa, N. Y.

Letters From Our Readers

Continued From Page 97

and its content and electrical conditions. It undoubtedly has powers of taste, smell and air pressure as well as radio transmission and reception in its tongue. This last suggested function is little understood but is believed to function as does the nose of a bat. Both seem to have radar functions. A bat never flies against an object in the dark. A snake very seldom misses a "strike". Today this is a favorite field of investigation and much has been learned.

How can a snake swallow and still protect its tongue and not smother by having its breath shut off? The answer is that a snake has two protective tubes, one for each purpose coming clear up to a slit in its lower lip. Now as a matter of conversation all Long Island snakes except the garter snake should be protected by law for such desirable snakes are the enemies of destructive rodents and insects. All facts have been checked against references which can be furnished.

Marvin M. Brooks, Wantagh,
Retired Director of Nature
Education, N. Y. City Public
Schools, for 17 years.

Roslyn Pilgrimage

The Village of Roslyn, known only as Ye Heade of ye Harbour in Colonial days, will open the doors of its historic old homes on June sixth this year to the visiting public, for the benefit of the Reading Room of the Bryant Library. The day long tour (10 A.M. — 5 P. M.) starting at the Library, will include the pre-Revolutionary home of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Williams, in a cavernous fireplace in which a child's pony was hidden from the British Redcoats; also the ancient Paper Mill and the Grist Mill, visited by our first president, and mentioned in his diary, as well as a visit to the home of Mr. Onderdonk, the proprietor. Included in the pilgrimage is the Onderdonk home, now the Washington Tavern.

"Cedarmere," country seat of the poet, William Cullen Bryant will be visited. Another feature of in-

Continued on back cover

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Pamphlets by the Forum

Long Island, Cradle of Aviation, by Preston R. Bassett, president Nassau County Historical Society. The island's part in world aeronautics, republished from Bailey's Long Island History.

First Train to Greenport, 1844, by Dr. Clarence A. Wood, for more than 40 years research attorney for the Court of Appeals, at Albany.

History of the Storms and Gales on Long Island, by Osborn Shaw, Official Historian, Town of Brookhaven; *The Hurricane of 1938*, by Dorothy Quick, Poetess and Novelist. Limited, numbered edition. Out of print.

History of Setauket Presbyterian Church, by Kate W. Strong, with introduction by the Rev. Frank M. Kerr, Hempstead. Limited number edition of 200.

The Talented Mount Brothers, by Jacqueline Overton, author of "Long Island's Story" and Librarian of the Children's Library, Westbury, with introduction by Harry Peters, art collector, critic, author and lecturer. Limited numbered edition of 500.

Long Island's First Italian, 1639, by Berne A. Pyke, former New York State Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets.

Streamlining a County Welfare Service, by Edwin W. Wallace, Commissioner Public Welfare, Nassau County.

To Florida and Back from Long Island (in 29-Foot Fishing Skiff), by Captain Charles Suydam, Jr., off-shore fisherman extraordinary.

Ezra L'Honmedieu, Island Statesman, by Dr. Clarence Ashton Wood. A biographical sketch of Southold Town's famous native son, "Father of the Board of Regents".

History of Patchogue Congregational Church, by Frank Overton, M.D.

The Pottery at Huntington, by Romanah Sammis, Official Historian, Town of Huntington. For sale by Huntington Historical Society.

The Thirteen Tribes, by Paul Bailey. A brief account of the Long Island Indians, including origin, religion, mode of living, habits, customs, and decline. Suitable for use in Social Studies. Illustrated.

History of the Long Island State Parks, by Chester R. Blakelock, Executive Secretary, Long Island State Park Commission. Republished from Bailey's Long Island History. For particulars address author, Babylon, N. Y.

Birthplace of John Howard Payne, by Dr. Clarence Ashton Wood, Contributing Editor Long Island Forum. A comprehensive presentation of conclusive proof that the author of "Home, Sweet Home" was born in New York City. Limited edition.

A Small Boat Trip to Florida (Winter of 1947-48), by Captain Charles Suydam, Jr.

True Tales from the early days of Long Island, as told by Kate W. Strong, based on records, documents and other data in her private collection, 14 Pamphlets, each one containing a number of Miss Strong's original stories, reprinted from the Long Island Forum. For particulars address Miss Kate W. Strong, The Cedars, Setauket, L. I.

Distribution of Wild Orchids on Long Island by Roy Latham, well known authority. Limited, numbered edition. Sold by author, Orient, L. I.

Five Thousand Years of Relief, by Edwin W. Wallace, Commissioner Public Welfare, Nassau County; President, New York Association of Public Welfare Officials.

Tales of An Island and Its People, by Dr. Clarence A. Wood. A group of seven sketches on Long Island's famous horses and horsemen of yesteryear, and other historical subjects.

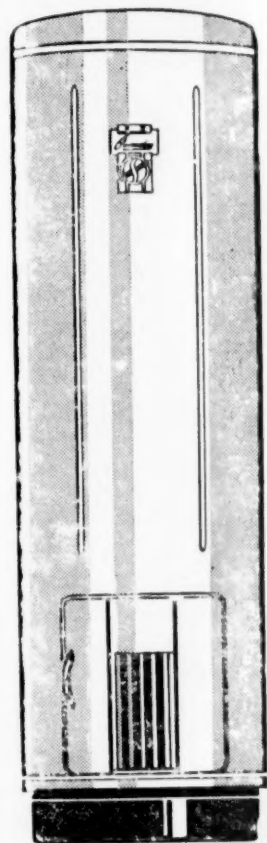
David Frothingham, Pioneer Editor, by Nancy Boyd Willey, Official Historian, Village of Sag Harbor.

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BETHPAGE, L. I.

Letters From Our Readers

Continued from page 98

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early maps, prints, paintings, pho-
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tickets at \$2.50 can be procured by
writing to the Bryant Library,
Roslyn, N. Y., until the end of May.

* * *

Forum Authors Cited

James Taylor Dunn, Librarian,
New York State Historical Associa-
tion, cited the following articles
from the last October, November
and December numbers of the Long
Island Forum in his quarterly sel-
ection of material from about the
State: Passing of the Thirteen
Tribes, by Paul Bailey; Arizona's
Long Island Governor, by H. P.
Horton; Our South Shore Inlets, by
Julian Denton Smith; John Lyon
Gardiner's Judgeship, by Dr. Mal-
colm M. Willey; General Wood-
ford Long Islander, A. Schooner
and Her Skipper, and Sidney Rich,
Singing Soldier, by Dr. Clarence
Ashton Wood.

* * *

I really enjoy reading the Forum
and take a great interest in all of
its articles.

Arthur W. Overton,
Islip.

* * *

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trees, wild animals. Why shouldn't
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I nominate him as the first
chairman and suggest he be called
Chief Breaker.

G. P. S., Quogue

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